

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06BUENOSAIRES1912, THE LEADING CENTER-LEFT OPPOSITION LEADER ON

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#06BUENOSAIRES1912.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BUENOSAIRES1912	2006-08-25 18:20	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1357063-eeuu-veia-una-oposicion-cercana-a-la-irrelevancia>

VZCZCXRO1632
PP RUEHCD RUEHGA RUEHGD RUEHHA RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHQU RUEHTM RUEHVC
DE RUEHBU #1912/01 2371820
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 251820Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5678
INFO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNA/DEA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNMRC/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 1694

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BUENOS AIRES 001912

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA TOM SHANNON, JOHN MAISTO, AND CHARLES SHAPIRO
NSC FOR DAN FISK

TREASURY FOR DAS NANCY LEE
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/25/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: THE LEADING CENTER-LEFT OPPOSITION LEADER ON
ARGENTINA'S POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: 05 BUENOS AIRES 01391

Classified By: CDA, a.i., Michael Matera, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

¶1. (C) On August 24, ADCM and Poloff (notetaker) met with center-left opposition leader Elisa Carrio, who gave her view of the current political situation in Argentina. Elisa Carrio began the discussion with her analysis of President Kirchner's foreign policy, which she argued was marked by a confrontational style and a dangerous relationship with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. In a surprising admission, Carrio said that Kirchner's relationship with the USG is the only thing that is moderating Kirchner's alliance with Chavez. Carrio lamented in her words the lack of strategic vision that Brazil has, praised Chilean President Bachelet, and urged the U.S. to do everything we can to ensure that President Garcia succeeds in Peru to prevent "another Chavez."

¶2. (C) Turning to domestic politics, Elisa Carrio argued that President Kirchner would likely win reelection in 2007, but that Kirchner's government would fail in the long term. Carrio argued the opposition needed to be ready to assume power when Kirchner falls and said that opposition alliances only made it easier for Kirchner to poach new allies. Asked about the future of her old party, the Radical Civic Union (UCR), she said the party was dying. Carrio reported good relations with Republican Proposal (PRO) leaders Mauricio Macri and Ricardo Lopez Murphy, but disagreed with their vision to solve the country's crime problem. Regarding ARI and her own future, she said it was good for her to step aside from the party leadership and expressed confidence that she and ARI would eventually run the country. Carrio also lamented Argentina's weak institutions and the lack of intelligent debate in the Argentine Congress.

¶3. (C) Background: Elisa Carrio is the most significant center-left opposition figure in Argentina. She ran for President in 2003, coming in fifth place. She is currently a member of the Lower House of Congress, representing the City of Buenos Aires. She is a declared candidate for the 2007 presidential elections. Carrio has recently given up her leadership role in the party she founded in 2001, Affirmation for an Egalitarian Republic (ARI), but she remains ARI's presidential candidate and continues to have regular contact with ARI's leadership. ARI has been plagued by several recent defections to President Kirchner's alliance and disputes within the party over a controversial birth control bill, which led Carrio to step aside from her party leadership position. Poloff met on August 23 with Fernando Cantero, the leader of ARI's bloc in the Buenos Aires City Legislature, who strongly criticized Carrio's authoritarian tendencies and failure to explain her meetings with center-right politicians like Ricardo Lopez Murphy and Patricia Bullrich to the party faithful. (For more on Elisa Carrio and ARI, see reftel.) END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

ARGENTINA'S CONFRONTATIONAL FOREIGN POLICY

¶4. (C) On August 24, ADCM and Poloff (notetaker) met with center-left opposition leader Elisa Carrio, who gave her view of the current political situation in Argentina. Elisa Carrio began the discussion with her analysis of President Kirchner's foreign policy, which she argued was marked by a

confrontational style and a dangerous relationship with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. "Kirchner picks fights with everyone in the region. It was wrong for Kirchner to snub Peruvian President Garcia by skipping his inauguration. Kirchner has also created conflicts with Uruguay and Paraguay." Carrio attributed Kirchner's confrontational style to his background in Patagonia and insular style.

BUENOS AIR 00001912 002 OF 004

"Everyone on the outside is viewed as an enemy. He has little understanding of the larger world."

15. (C) Carrio argued that Kirchner's relationship with Chavez is based primarily on corrupt business deals managed by Planning Minister Julio De Vido, but carried with it serious dangers because it could draw Argentina into the Mideast conflict because of Chavez's close relations with Iran. "Kirchner can disagree publicly with Chavez on certain issues, but that will never affect the business deals that he and De Vido have with Chavez." For Carrio, the relationship with Venezuela was risky. "The United States is deeply involved in the Mideast conflict and Europe cannot avoid it. Latin American can and should avoid being drawn into the conflict. Chavez's relationship with Iran is dangerous and could pull Argentina into the conflict."

16. (C) In a surprising admission, Carrio said that Kirchner's relationship with the USG is the only thing that is moderating Kirchner's alliance with Chavez. For Carrio, there are limits on how far Kirchner is willing to go with Chavez because Kirchner does not want a major conflict with the United States. "Kirchner will never seek a serious conflict with the United States. He is fascinated with the U.S., even though he only really knows New York."

17. (C) Carrio lamented in her words the lack of strategic vision that Brazil has, praised Chilean President Bachelet, and urged the U.S. to do everything we can to ensure that President Garcia succeeds in Peru to prevent "another Chavez." Carrio argued that Brazil's lack of strategic vision and weakness in the region has allowed Chavez to gain influence in the region, which is compounded by Kirchner's alliance with Chavez. She acknowledged that many people hope the situation will improve after Brazilian President Lula wins re-election, but she herself was not optimistic. She said she saw a lot of herself in Chilean President Bachelet and thought Bachelet would be successful. Carrio argued that Peruvian runner-up Ollanta Humala was another Chavez that would assume power in Peru if President Garcia failed.

18. (C) Carrio said that Bolivian President Morales was not like Chavez and instead represented the legitimate desire of the Bolivian indigenous majority for a political voice. "Don't confuse Morales with Chavez. Morales has to succeed in order to preserve social order in Bolivia. He needs to be like Nelson Mandela in South Africa."

19. (C) On Cuba, Carrio said that the GOC was a dictatorship. "For me, Fidel Castro was a hero at one time, and the Cuban revolution had a legitimate original purpose. Now, however, we have to recognize that it has just become a dictatorship."

DOMESTIC SITUATION BLEAK, BUT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LONG TERM

110. (C) Elisa Carrio argued that President Kirchner would likely win reelection in 2007, but that Kirchner's government would fail in the long term. Carrio said that despite Kirchner's apparent political strength, his support is thin. "Kirchner is an evil that is very wide, but only three centimeters deep. Unlike Alfonsin and Menem, Kirchner lacks charisma, and no one has a great love for him. Even his closest associates would prefer not to stand next to him.

Kirchner has no real political party, since the Peronist Party structure is gone. Also, since the crisis, Argentina has lacked the political corporate solidarity that it once had to support a president in crisis. When the next crisis hits, Kirchner could fall very quickly." She said that Kirchner will not be able to modify the Constitution to run again in 2011 because he will fall before he has a chance.

¶11. (C) Carrio argued the opposition needed to be ready to assume power when Kirchner falls and said that opposition

BUENOS AIR 00001912 003 OF 004

alliances only made it easier for Kirchner to poach new allies. Carrio noted that ARI has been training thousands of activists over the past several years on how to properly run a functioning government. Carrio said that ARI has avoided being involved in opposition alliances to prevent the dilution of their political force, which she said would only benefit Kirchner. "In ARI we have 15 percent of the vote that Kirchner cannot touch. The proposed opposition alliance will be a marriage of the worst of Radicalismo and Duhaldisimo in support of Lavagna. Lavagna will lose in the end and then Kirchner will co-opt most of the alliance's legislators."

¶12. (C) Asked about the future of her old party, the Radical Civic Union (UCR), she said the party was dying. "The party convention that is starting tomorrow is the beginning of the end." Carrio said that the Radicales that align with Kirchner will be absorbed into Peronism within a few years, as the Peronists have done with several other parties that have aligned with it over the past 60 years.

¶13. (C) Carrio reported good relations with Republican Proposal (PRO) leaders Mauricio Macri and Ricardo Lopez Murphy, but disagreed with their vision to solve the country's crime problem. Carrio said that the crime issue was too important to be entrusted to the center-right, who want to solve the problem by changing the penal code to increase sentences. Carrio argued that the real source of the crime problem was poverty and drugs. Carrio said that Carlos Bloomberg had become the center of the anti-crime campaign, which was problematic because Bloomberg was vulnerable to attack by Kirchner because of a potential fraud scandal involving a failed Bloomberg business several years ago. The center-right's control over the crime issue played into Kirchner's hands, Carrio argued. "Kirchner wants to create the appearance of a fight between the rich and the poor, where he is seen as the defender of the poor. Kirchner uses D'Elia to help create this situation and Bloomberg is a convenient target."

¶14. (C) Regarding ARI and her own future, she said it was good for her to step aside from the party leadership and expressed confidence that she and ARI would eventually run the country. "They (the ARI leadership) need to learn to take responsibility. They have shifted left since I stepped down, but it is all part of the development process. ARI is a small party, but one day it will govern the country." Carrio said that the polls show people admire her, but the majority of people would never vote for her. "I talk about the need for a 20-year plan to change this country, about the need for a Moncloa Pact in this country between labor, business and the government. Argentines want someone to give them a short-term solution and there are no short-term solutions to Argentina's problems. The people need to change their way of thinking."

¶15. (C) Carrio lamented Argentina's weak institutions and the lack of intelligent debate in the Argentine Congress. "When I first entered Congress in 1995, the members of Congress could at least debate issues and reach agreements, even the Menemists. Now, there is no debate. Everyone is too scared of saying something that will offend Kirchner and most legislators lack the formation to carry on an intelligent debate on the issues." Carrio said that the Supreme Court was the only remaining independent institution

in the country. Carrio argued that Kirchner did not fill the two vacancies on the court because he regretted the independent justices that he appointed early in his term. Carrio said that Kirchner planned to appoint cronies to the court after he wins election, starting with Legal and Technical Secretary Carlos Zannini.

COMMENT

¶16. (C) Elisa Carrio's broad education and her log experience in Argentine politics make her an interesting

BUENOS AIR 00001912 004 OF 004

person to talk to about the country's political situation. She is also one of the few Argentine political leaders that seems to genuinely care about the health of the country's democratic institutions. Carrio has had difficult time explaining how to translate her broad proposals and solutions into concrete reality. As a result, polls show that although Argentines generally like Carrio's discourse and think that she makes a positive contribution to the dialogue in Congress, they would be reluctant to vote for her for an executive position. Her apparent inability to manage her own party only adds to this impression. Carrio will need to demonstrate her management skills to the Argentine public in the coming years or risk permanently surrendering the leadership of the opposition to the center-right. We will continue to meet with Carrio periodically in the coming year to assist our political reporting in the run-up to next year's presidential elections.

MATERA